In order to gather together in a common place, in addition to the tracks they leave they twist branches and handsful of grass at crossroads in order that their companions may know where to find them, they having prearranged the meaning of the signs. 487 201

[193] Another means of communication is by making fires. During our traveling about the Chaco we were continually surrounded by fires, either at close quarters or far away, fires which sometimes took on the proportions of colossal blazes. And often, when we thought that we were in absolute solitude, it would happen that upon approaching an Indian village we would be informed that we were expected, and we would hear tell of the order which had been observed in our march. 202

They make use, moreover, of many spies and informers. In Mataco the former are called niguaiecque, and the latter gu'éicáss. 701 ● [203]

They apparently do have some sort of tactical organization: thus they have a general chief, subordinate chief and petty chieftains. The first is called, in Mataco, canniat tizán, the second, canniat, and as for the last, I have forgotten.

The general chiefs are chosen at second remove, that is, from among the subordinate chiefs, who, in turn, are elected by the people. Normally a marked preference is shown for the late chief's sons, provided they be of age, courageous and good. But then, of course, we must say that in these elections the same passions are present which appear amongst us in our elections.

They also have another category of persons, whom they call nyát and corresponds vaguely to the Spanish "caballero" or the "galantuomo" of southern Italy. So it is that they refer to any white persons whom they consider of quality with the name nyát. It is to be supposed that a like distinction is made among the other Indians. In Peru and wherever the Quechua language is spoken, gentlemen are called Viracocha. [554] [609]

Once the general chief has been elected the subordinate elector chiefs go to call on him when they can, which visits are celebrated with the accustomed drinking and eating orgies. A general chieftainship almost always embraces villages far removed from each other.

The Matacos call those who visit them tzicki-ác.

The authorities among the Chaco Indians play an almost purely military role. In peace time they lose practically all their prestige,

although they retain their position of ministers of "foreign affairs," 701
representing the tribe before outsiders either to treat some matter,
or to form an alliance for either war or peace. And even then
their leadership is not of much value for the members of the tribe,
the populace, are free to refuse to go to war -- although actually
their pride only rarely allows them to hold back.

When a chief plans an attack he gets the advice of the old 721
men of the tribe and of other influential persons, and if these do
not set their approval upon his plan he nevertheless invites those
who will to follow him.

Sometimes, though, large scale invasions are planned by
the allied chiefs of several villages. When we arrived at the vil-
lage of Chaguaral, we found there a group of eleven or thirteen
chiefs, all Matacos, who were awaiting the arrival of [194] their
allies with whom, shortly thereafter, they invaded the territory
of other Matacos who three months earlier had given them a good
drubbing.

While they are on their way to wage war they vociferate 726
wildly, shouting both threateningly and happily. They dye part [302]
of their faces and bodies black and sometimes muss up their al-
ready unkempt hair until they look like "lost souls," in the opinion
of a Christian Indian. On the eve of battle, those who have the
wherewithal deck their hair, waist and ankles with feathers, pre-
ferring red or yellow ones, and tie any rag they may have with
them tightly about their midriffs. When combat begins they
break out with the most bloodcurdling yells.

This business of putting on warpaint is common to almost 730
all savages: it was the custom also among those whom the Romans
called barbarians; for example, according to Claudius the
Sigambrians used to dye their hair a brilliant red before going into
battle.

The chiefs have the place of honour in the thickest of the 726
battle, which always results in the death of some of them. If the 622
invaders win, they sack everything, capture the women, the 727
children and cattle, parcel out the booty and set fire to the vil-
lage.

They give no quarter to the warriors and only rarely do they 727
spare the lives of the older women because they distrust them as